

UNITY AND COHERENCE

Unity is a matter of logical direction; *coherence* is a matter of interlocking connection. Good communication uses both unity and coherence—concentrating on a single, limited subject (unity) and providing clear directional signals (coherence).

In communication, unity means oneness. One subject, one controlling attitude, one tone. In all your writing—sentences, paragraphs, short and long papers—you will work for this oneness.

The key to unity is to keep focused on the argumentative controlling attitude toward your single, limited subject. This controlling attitude is a pointer; it provides the focus and logical direction for all the paper's ideas. Unity gives direction.

A good thesis statement or topic sentence, therefore, provides two fundamental keys to unity:

1. A single, limited subject area.
2. A specific, limited predicate area (controlling attitude).

Coherence is the effect of interlocking connection provided by directional signals of many kinds, designed to guide the reader in the one direction established through unity. The key to coherence is the word interlocking. Through interlocking devices, the writer ties sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph to achieve coherence. There are 7 ways to achieve coherence.

1. Coherence through *consistent point of view*

Considered grammatically, point of view involves two basic elements: 1. The grammatical subject of each sentence (person). 2. The verb (tense as a time indicator).

2. Coherence through *pronoun reference*. Repeating the same noun too often in a paragraph, especially if repetition isn't needed for clarity, will usually bore the reader. With care, you can use a series of pronouns to do the job; the result is a series of interlocking, pointed grammatical signals clearly referring to an antecedent noun and providing logical continuity.

3. Coherence through *repetition of key words*

4. Coherence through *spatial order of sentences*

In using spatial order to achieve coherence, a writer explains or describes objects as they are arranged in space.

5. Coherence through *chronological order of sentences*

Chronological order means simply the order in which events happen.

6. Coherence through *related sentence patterns*

Holding a paragraph together by repetition of sentence patterns within the paragraph is a relatively difficult means of achieving coherence because it requires more care in designing sentences, but it is an effective means.

7. Coherence through *transition words*

Probably the easiest, and most abused, method of pulling together the thought in a passage is through the use of transition words. Transition words or phrases serve as signals to interlock

sentences. They direct the reader from the thought of one sentence to that of another and indicate the relationship between the two sentences.

EXERCISE

The scrambled list below contains both major reasons and supporting details for those reasons. First, circle the thesis; next, identify the major reasons; finally, list the supporting details for each reason.

- A. Your order is ready no more than three minutes or so after placing it.
- B. A hostess is present in the dining room to help you with the children.
- C. The workers wear clean uniforms, and their hands are clean.
- D. There are French fries in two sizes.
- E. The hostess hand out moistened cloths to wash the children after they eat.
- F. Eating at Burger Village offers several advantages
- G. The menu lists a variety of items.
- H. You do not have to spend more than a couple of minutes in the waiting line, which moves quickly.
- I. You can order several sizes and types of hamburgers, a fish sandwich with or without cheese, or a ham and cheese sandwich.
- J. The hostess helps you take off the children's coats and brings a highchair for the baby.
- K. The place is clean.
- L. You can choose from several flavors of milk shakes and several kinds of soft drinks, as well as coffee or hot chocolate.
- M. A person is constantly sweeping the floor, collecting trays, and wiping off tables.
- N. The kitchen area is all clean and polished stainless steel.
- O. The service is fast and convenient.
- P. The hostess gives the children small cups to drink from and hats to keep them entertained.
- Q. Your order comes packaged in a bag or box that you can carry out with you..